

STRICTURES

UPON

DR. PRICE'S SERMON.

[PRICE 6d.]

THE TITLES

THE PRINCIPLES

THE HISTORY

5

A
L E T T E R

TO THE

REV. DR. PRICE:

CONTAINING A FEW

S T R I C T U R E S

UPON

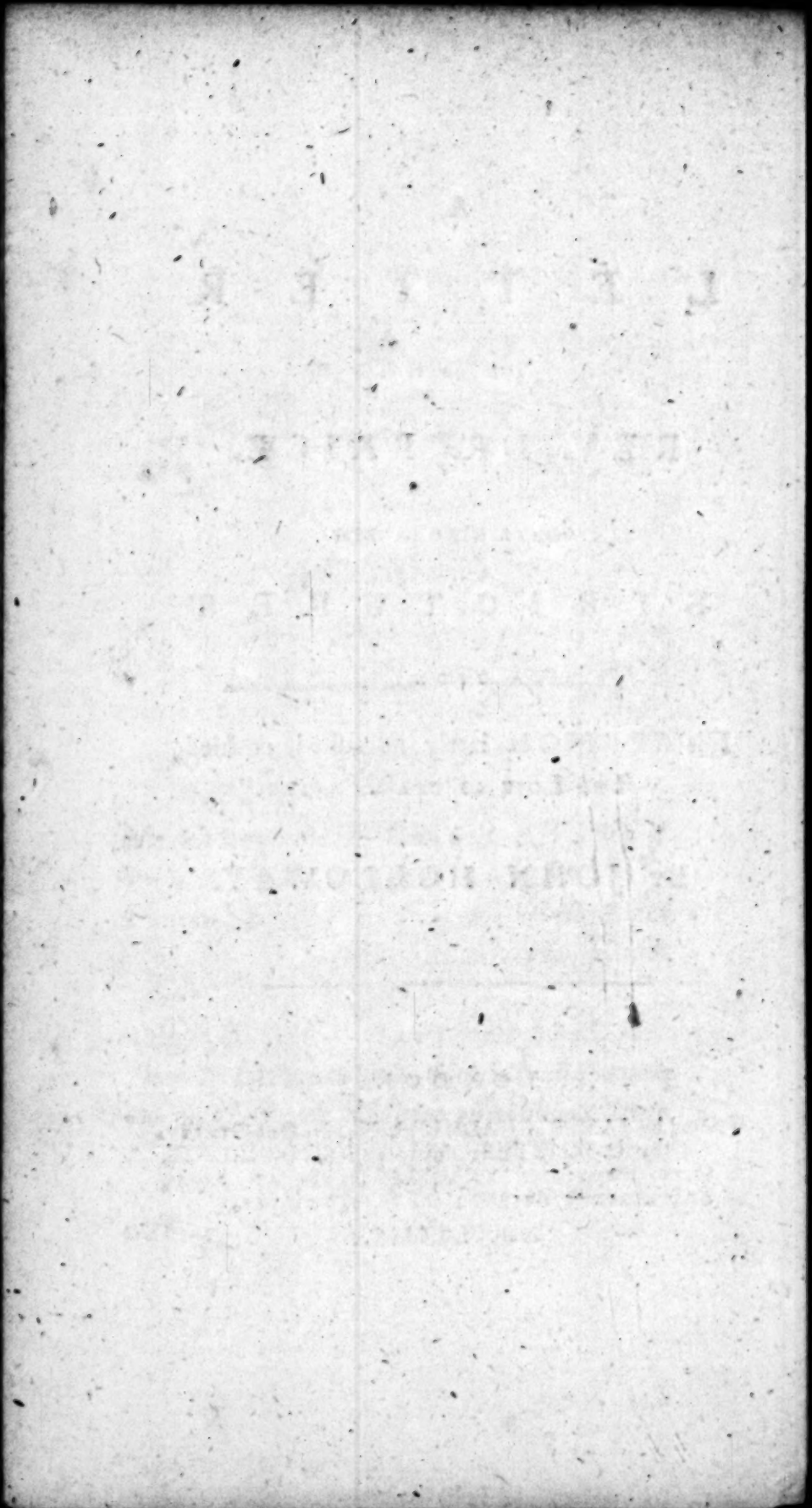
HIS SERMON lately published, entitled,
"THE LOVE OF OUR COUNTRY."

BY JOHN HOLLOWAY.

L O N D O N :

Printed by JAMES CHALMERS, No. 81, OLD STREET;
Sold by C. FORSTER, POULTRY; T. SCOLICK,
CITY ROAD; PARSLEY, SURREY ROAD,
BLACKFRIAR'S BRIDGE; and by the PRINTER,

MDCCLXXXIX.



A
L E T T E R,

Ec. Ec. Ec.

REVEREND SIR,

WERE I to apologize to you for the liberty I take in making a few remarks upon one part of your Sermon, I should offer you an insult.

A heart like yours, which so nobly pants for freedom—for universal liberty, must necessarily consider this humble attempt in a favourable light.

You

You have yourself set me an example for liberty of speech: and whatever disparity there may be between us, arising from education, genius, and other local circumstances, there is certainly not so much as between yourself and HIM* whom you have in your turn taken the liberty to advise.

Did not you and your friends unite in the laudable exertion of opposing every encroachment of despotism—preserving the liberty of the press—and thus setting an example worthy of the imitation of the world, this Letter of mine would appear to some as an unpardonable sin. But I shield myself under your joint banners: and whatever reception I shall meet with from others, I may rest assured of the protection of the Sons of Freedom.

I also comfort myself, that from such men of liberty, no criticism will be made upon

* His Majesty.

the

the inaccuracy of my style; as the want of a classical education, or an extensive genius, is the fault of no one.

I consider myself in the situation of David going to meet Goliath. And were I not convinced that it is the privilege of the ploughman, no less than the philosopher, to speak his sentiments; and that in the great scale of being, and before the inscrutable eye of the Judge of men, the difference of rank is lost; whatever confidence I might repose in your generosity, I should nevertheless tremble at my weak attempt.

Without further preface, permit me to speak freely with you upon the unadvised attack you have made upon the principles you call Methodism, in your Sermon lately published.

Page 15 and 16.—“ I must add here,
“ that in the practice of virtue I include
B “ the

“ the discharge of the public duties of re-
 “ ligion. By neglecting these we may
 “ injure our country essentially. But it
 “ is melancholy to observe that it is a
 “ common neglect among us; and in a
 “ great measure owing to a cause which
 “ is not likely to be soon removed: I
 “ mean, the defects (may I not say, the
 “ absurdities?) in our established codes of
 “ faith and worship. In foreign countries,
 “ the higher ranks of men, not distin-
 “ guishing between the religion they see
 “ established and the Christian religion,
 “ are generally driven to irreligion and
 “ infidelity. The like evil is produced
 “ by the like cause in this country; and if
 “ no reformation of our established for-
 “ mularies can be brought about, it must
 “ be expected that religion will go on to
 “ lose its credit, and that little of it will
 “ be left except among the lower orders
 “ of people, many of whom, while their
 “ superiors give up all religion, are sink-
 “ ing into a barbarism in religion lately
 “ revived

“ revived by Methodism ; and mistaking,
 “ as the world has generally done, the
 “ service acceptable to God for a system of
 “ faith souring the temper, and a service
 “ of forms supplanting morality.”

Having quoted the offensive paragraph, I shall be very concise in my observations upon it. My chief argument to confute your assertion shall proceed from your own confession; and the Public shall judge between us.

Some years ago a Nobleman asked your advice respecting his Borough, which was so remarkably dissolute as to require an immediate reformation. You replied—the most effectual way would be to send down an Enthusiast.—The Nobleman gave you a commission to procure one. Several Gentlemen now living are privy to the fact.

Now, Sir, by your own private confession, you gave an Enthusiast the preference

ence to convert the vulgar *. Does this comport with your present sentiments?—Is it not perfectly inconsistent with your reflections? Can it be believed that you should undertake to recommend an Enthusiast for the purpose of reforming a dissolute parish; and at the same time consider the religion of the Enthusiast BARBAROUS—and the system tending to “four the temper, and supplant morality?”

The reformation of these hardened characters was recommended to you; and you actually employed a Gentleman to procure a Methodist for that purpose.

If these poor men were so ignorant and depraved, would not a sensible Unitarian have

* I apprehend you draw a line between the circles of the gay, and the lower classes of society; for the conversion of the former you would appoint the rational Unitarian; for the conversion of the latter, the illiterate Enthusiast.

Both parties have a work cut out for them; let there be no disagreement; a few revolving seasons will decide which party were most sincere, as well as most successful,

done

done more service towards enlightening their minds, and reforming their manners, than the simple Methodist?

Two inferences the judicious and unprejudiced will draw—first, that you knew of no Unitarian who cared a straw for the real conversion of those vulgar persons;—or, that for once your prejudices gave way, and you thought a Methodist the proper person for such employment; for it would be worse than the “barbarism of Methodism” itself to suppose you had a wish to disseminate ignorance; and harden into adamant itself the poor wretches thrown upon your mercy!

But, good Sir, what do you mean by the term Methodism?—Have you done these people called Methodists the honour of reducing their principles to a regular system?—What publication of yours has defined the term?—What idea do you mean to hold out to the Public by this discrimination?—Shall I be guilty of injustice,

tice, if I say that you can only have two views—either to hold out the Methodists to ridicule, or to persecution?—The latter cannot be: though the reflection against them is extremely severe;—but “charity covereth a multitude of sins:”—the first view, therefore, must be adopted—that you mean to hold up to ridicule the principles of Methodism, or rather the Methodists themselves.

But is this JUST?—Is this GENEROUS?—Is it of a piece with your PROFESSIONS OF LIBERALITY?—Is it agreeable to that GENERAL COURTESY which distinguishes your character?—By no means.

Is it JUST in you to reproach a system which is entirely undefined?—Should you not have condescended to have singled out those peculiar tenets of Methodism that appear to you so offensive; and not involved in indiscriminate contempt all its principles?

Need

Need I inform you that many of those principles are your own ; such as—the belief of one God—and one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus—the doctrines of repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—obedience to his commands—the resurrection of the dead—and a future state of rewards and punishments ? Have you not called these the principal doctrines of Christianity, and all other matters of faith of little moment ?—Surely these are not the doctrines you wish to ridicule !

I know your reply :

“ But the Methodists believe the doctrine of the Trinity.”

And do not most Protestant churches ?

“ But they believe the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.”

And is not this consonant with the creeds of almost all Christendom ?

“ But

“ But some of them believe the absurd doctrine of perfection.”

And does not your friend Dr. P——y ?

“ But they believe the doctrine of regeneration, or a new birth unto righteousness.”

And did not our Saviour teach it ?

“ Verily I say unto you, Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God ?

“ Yes,” you reply ; “ but our Saviour’s meaning was different to theirs.”

Admitting this to be true—do not impute their misconstruction of words to wickedness, but to ignorance—and you cordially believe mental error to be no crime.

I hope the zeal of the Methodists is no offence to you ?—Is it a great crime for men to go out into the highways and hedges—

hedges—to preach in the open air, and endeavour to civilize and disciple the nations of the world? Surely this cannot offend you! “Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,” is their commission.

“But have these men a commission?” Let all the Arians that have a commission to preach the gospel spare them their trouble!

The present great seminary at Hackney will be an excellent nursery to train up young men to take up the commission. If the sentiments of the Unitarians, so called, are to be preferred, and they are found most productive of real good, let the professors of them shew their zeal for the glory of God—let them go abroad and convert the heathen nations—let them imitate the indefatigable zeal of other Missionaries—let them attend at public places of resort, and preach to the dissolute and profane, that will not attend at public places of worship—let them shew a holy determination,

C

with

with an Apostle, not to "know any thing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified"—to inspire mankind with a veneration for the Saviour of sinners, and cry out, "Behold the Lamb of God! that taketh away the sin of the world"—let them publish that Jesus Christ is the "propitiation for the sins of the whole world," and exhort men to be reconciled to God.

I ask—What part of Methodism do you object to?

It would be criminal to suppose you are sorry that the colliers of Kingwood, and other desperate gangs, who used to be the terror of the neighbouring country, are now become a civilized people. You may indeed feel a chagrin that the ministers of your profession did not prevent the honour the Methodists acquired by thus hazarding their lives unto death, and bringing about so desirable a reformation.

The

The indefinite term **ENTHUSIASM** * most probably you apply to the Methodists.—
 “ They are Enthusiasts.”

And are not you one, Reverend Sir? Can you seriously believe them to be greater Enthusiasts in the cause of religion than you are in the cause of freedom? Have they taken greater pains to prove our blessed Saviour an object of worship, than you have to prove him not to be an object of worship? Has not your zeal, in this instance, kept pace with theirs?

* The celebrated Er——ne has been extremely fortunate; had the subjects of his eloquence been religion, he would have lost his character long ago.

It has been a disgrace to this distinguished nation for years, that the bar and the theatre should be crowded, and in general the churches of rational ministers remain empty. It will be shrewdly guessed, that if these Gentlemen appeared to be as earnest in the cause of truth, as the player is in supporting fiction, or the orator in the cause of his client, their churches would be as well attended. But many places of worship are now become temples of repose; a pew is as convenient to recline the head on as a pillow.

Have the Methodists taken greater liberties with men's vices than you have, and very justly, with arbitrary principles? Why be angry at your brethren in Enthusiasm? Surely religion is as noble an object as politics; and their principles as dear to them as yours are to yourself.

I am greatly mistaken if you would have stood so high in the opinion of the Public, had you been that dull plodding character which disgraces some of your profession. If no animation—if no Enthusiasm had entered into your composition, you would have experienced the fate of many preachers, and have harangued to pews and pillars.

Why is every eye fixed upon your countenance? Why is attention marked upon every face? Why is the ear charmed by your discourses?—Because your tone is emphatical, and you feel your subject.

Again—

Again—Is it GENEROUS to condemn a whole body of men for professing to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences? Is not the term METHODISM designed as a censure and mark of reproach upon those who class themselves under that profession? And are you perfectly assured, that as a body they deserve your censure? Are you not acquainted with many devout characters in your own neighbourhood even, who demand your respect? Or has the voice of calumny only reached your ear?

Let your paragraph, in its unqualified state, be read to an illiterate man—tell him that his next door neighbour is a Methodist—what effect would it produce upon his mind?—I am assured it would not lead him to respect his neighbour.

But admitting for a moment that the first Methodists were guilty of a few indiscretions, half a century is now elapsed since their first rise; and except you can
prove

prove the present persons guilty of the faults you may impute to their forefathers, it is as ungenerous to use the distinguishing term of their sect by way of reproach, as it would be were we to affix to the modern Arians the persecuting spirit of the ancient Arians—to the present Socinians the persecuting spirit of Socinus—to the Anabaptists, so termed, the sanguinary tempers of their leaders in Germany—or the present respectable society of Quakers, the absurd and indecent conduct of some of the first of their party.

Men live to see their first errors; and a different meaning is at length affixed to the terms of their several professions.

Again—Is it of a piece with your PROFESSIONS OF LIBERALITY? Will you not most cheerfully allow the same liberty of conscience to others which you are seeking yourself? Or do you aim, in putting down one system to introduce another? Have you not repeatedly and most
beauti-

beautifully shewn it to be the duty of every man to worship God according to his conscience, provided the state is not endangered, and he demean himself as a peaceable citizen? Why, in this instance, have you overstepped the boundary of your own marking, and contradicted your own reasonings?

Never ought it to have been conjectured, that from a mind so unprejudiced and unshackled—a pen so accurate as yours—so loose and unguarded an expression should have dropped—an expression that hurts the cause of that religion you wish to defend. For you must be sufficiently conversant with the world to know, that all persons who are supposed to possess more piety than their neighbours are dubbed Methodists. Witness those clergymen in or out of the church, who appear to be in earnest to save the souls of their hearers.

Lastly,

Lastly, Is your assertion agreeable to that GENERAL COURTESY which so peculiarly distinguishes and exalts your character.

Some accommodation is undoubtedly due to the weakness of others : some deference must be paid even to their prejudices. If any way will gain over a brother this will.

If I profess an acquaintance with the laws of civility, I should be the last to laugh at a man more deformed than myself; or to conceive the less favourable of him whose principal defect was want of information.

The ploughman can sow his land, though he cannot lecture upon the laws of vegetation.

The itinerant layman can cry out,
 "Except ye repent ye shall all perish;"
 though

though he be not able to make a disquisition upon liberty or necessity.

The honest Christian will not be thought the less of by the Almighty because he believes the obvious truths contained in the first of St. John's Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God; and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us"—if he have not so happy a talent in reasoning as some have. If he have not capacity sufficient to do away the force of the proposition in the words just quoted, think you his natural incapacity will be imputed to him as a crime?

Permit me seriously to give you my opinion—I would rather be in the situation of those who believe the obvious truths of the Gospel, than of those who have such depth of learning, such acuteness of penetration, as to perceive the meaning of an

D

Apostle

Apostle to be directly contrary to his assertions.

Milner's Essays on several religious subjects, just published, to be had of C. Dilly in the Poultry, prevent my enlarging the subject of this Letter; as that Gentleman has defended, in a most masterly manner, what you have condemned—METHODISM. I beg leave to refer you to that treatise; and not without hopes, that as you are not professedly an infallible character, you may be so thoroughly convinced of the impropriety of the offensive paragraph, as either to qualify it, or totally expunge it, in a future edition of your Sermon.

For the information of such who may not have an inclination to purchase the above valuable treatise, I trust you will excuse me if I here introduce a specimen of that Gentleman's reasoning.

Page 23, &c.—After noticing the illiberality of the Critical and Monthly Reviewers,

viewers, he observes—" Though I am far from being sanguine in my expectations of any great effects from the writings of so obscure a person as myself, I shall venture to intimate to both these sets of men*, that justice and candour would require them, and their favourite writers, who join with them in inveighing against these religionists, if they undertake at all to criticize their writings, to give us something more than the constant repetition of Enthusiasm, Bigotry, and the like. Let the views of the writers be fairly laid open; let the Public know what it is they really hold; and if it be absurd or unscriptural, let them come forth in a manly and liberal manner, and by solid argument confute it. Ill-natured witticisms, oblique hints, and general invective, require very little either of understanding or of attention to manage them. They have now before them the real out-lines of what is com-

* The Critical and Monthly Reviewers.

monly called Methodism. For be it still understood, that I have only used that word all along in compliance with custom. There is, in the nature of the thing, no necessity that real Christianity should in this age have a particular name assigned to it. I have not made it my business to prove at large the principles from Scripture. This has often been done by Methodistical writers. I have only stated what they really are, and endeavoured to exhibit them, unfullied with the dirt of obloquy, with which it has been so fashionable to asperse them.

“ Let the Reviewers prove, if they can, the four leading doctrines of Methodism* to be unscriptural. To say that they are not rational, is at best to say something so ambiguous, that nothing is decided by it.

* Viz. The necessity of divine illumination—Original sin—Justification by faith in the merits of Christ—and a holy life.

Let

Let the controversial ground which Methodism stands on be accurately ascertained. It is not infidel, but Christian ground. The Scriptures must, in the first place, be taken for granted as divinely inspired; and it must be believed to be a rational thing to abide by their authority. If the Reviewers will not allow this, the whole face of the controversy is altered. The Christian oracles have been demonstrated to be of divine original, before they or the name of Methodism had any existence. If this simple postulatam be admitted, the opposers of Methodism ought to examine the genius and spirit of the Scriptures—their evident design and tendency on the whole; and from such an examination to educe doctrinal views quite inconsistent with Methodism; to prove that its leading doctrines will not stand the test of Scripture, and that therefore they are not rational, because not consonant to the word of God, to which it is a most rational thing to give our assent.

“ And

“ And it will not be thought by reasonable persons an unfair thing, to call upon these men to make good the heavy charges of ignorance, fanaticism, and bigotry, which for many years they have vented against Methodism. To them it has seemed like lawful game, which they might hunt down at pleasure. It really puts one in mind of the rancorous terms in which Tacitus speaks of the primitive Christians, and of a sentence of our Divine Master, still more worthy to be remembered, “ Ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake.” Luke xxi. 17.”

I have now imitated your example and freedom of speech.—Our motives are similar.—You are laudably attempting to spread a genuine flame of liberty, free from licentiousness, through the globe, and thus rescuing nations yet unborn from the iron hand of cruelty and despotism.—I am also endeavouring to rescue a great body of people from undeserved ignominy and contempt.

tempt.—May our services in these respects be mutually successful*.

POSTSCRIPT.

If the memory of my friend can be depended upon, you did not use the offensive expression complained of in the pulpit:—What could induce you to make the in-

* It is nevertheless the opinion of many good men, who love civil and religious liberty equally with yourself, that your sublime ideas are more calculated for theory than for practice.—They think there is as yet too much barbarism in the world to allow any prospect of such refined ideas of liberty being realized in society. It is therefore to be expected that the Rational Divines, with a view to introduce such an excellent system, will immediately begin to labour among the lower classes of society, reform their manners, and make them sufficiently virtuous.

This will be a mean also to counteract, and in time extinguish, the "barbarism of Methodism," as well as make mankind believe these Gentlemen are serious, when they so pathetically deplore the fatality of its influence.

sertion

sertion afterwards, perhaps you will explain at some future time.

And now permit me, before I close my Letter, to address you, as a Minister of the Christian religion, upon a more important subject.

Do you not, Reverend Sir, lose sight of the genius or distinguishing traits of the religion of Christ?—Does it appear that our blessed Saviour ever attempted to accommodate himself to the prejudices of the Jews, who sought after a sign; or to the Greeks, who piqued themselves upon their superior knowledge:—to the former the cross of Christ was a stumbling-block, to the latter foolishness.

If I mistake not, the famous Necessitarian himself, in his Defence of Christianity, gives us a proof of its Divinity—the contrariety of the maxims of Christ, and the prejudices of his opponents.

That

That Christianity should make so rapid a progress among persons whose prejudices and vices it so warmly attacked, is acknowledged by all to be very marvellous, and a sufficient proof that it came from heaven.

The question is—Whether the Gospel of our Saviour requires any further explanation and accommodation than in the apostolic days? — And—Whether the various systems invented by speculative minds have not for their aim this officious design?

But why not let it stand or fall by its own intrinsic merit?—Does it require the additions of any man?—Or stands that in need of the philosopher's aid, which by the irreversible decree of God shall survive the ruins of the world?—"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of MY WORD shall fail."

May we not justly fear, that the same temper of mind, as formerly, prevails in

E

many

many great characters, who may probably rank themselves with the Grecian sage, and to whom the simplicity of the Christian religion may appear equally absurd and foolish?

You observe the declension of religion.—But are you perfectly assured of its real cause?—Before the evening of your life finally closes, perhaps you may alter your present views.

Is there not, in many writings of the present day, an evident tendency to degrade the Saviour of the world?—This I believe will be found to be the chief cause of the present declension in religion.

The first step to apostasy appears to me to be a denial of the Saviour's divinity;—the second, a denial of his pre-existent glory;—the third and last, a denial of the moral perfections of his character.—For what shade is there between these and the professed Deist?—The latter entertains as
high

high an opinion of Christ as the former ; both equally consider him to have been a decent good character, but subjected to failings as well as others.

Were we to trace the source of all the unwarrantable efforts that are made to undervalue the character of our Lord, we shall find they originate in a determination to set up human, or what the Apostle terms **WORLDLY WISDOM**, in opposition to the humiliating doctrines of Christ. What but this could have led your friendly antagonist * to embrace so unscriptural a creed ?

You were surprised when you heard him evade the force of the Scriptures you opposed to his reasonings, by denying in part their authority.—But is this great character more reprehensible than others ?—Do not the Apologists for the Arian system act a similar part ?—And however you may

* Dr. P—y.

justly lament the depravity of the times, permit me to assure you, that there are thousands of good and respectable characters, who lament that you have also given too much countenance to the present fashionable sentiments respecting the great Author of our holy religion.

Is it unfair to ask you—If you had no difficulty upon your mind when you cautiously advised your readers not to consider our Saviour as an object of divine worship * ? Did not the reasonings of Abbadie give you some trouble ? Did you then, and can you now, point out any trace in the apostolic writings, or any example to justify such a caution ?

The Apostles descended to every explanation necessary both for the faith and practice of the first Christians ; but no fears arose in the breasts of those inspired men, that their idolatrous converts would

* See the Sermon upon the Pre-existence of Christ.

degenerate into a new idolatry, of worshipping Jesus Christ.

If an Arian Divine were called to disciple a nation of idolaters; after he had exhibited Jesus Christ as the Messiah—enlarged upon his pre-existent glory—described his miracles—and exalted his character—would he not expressly warn them against paying religious worship to the Founder of the new faith?

Agreeable to your views, this Missionary would act with far greater propriety than the Apostles of our Lord, whose omission cannot but appear highly reprehensible, if not criminal.

If this should be considered rather inconclusive, I beg leave to appeal to the fatal consequences attending their neglect—millions of Christians having, for want of such warning, been led into idolatry.

But

But gloomy indeed would have been the face of religion, if such inaccuracies and omissions could be justly chargeable upon the inspired writers.

It remains therefore, in my opinion, a decided proposition, that Jesus Christ is an object of religious worship; and that every attempt to depreciate his dignity tends to the spread of irreligion in the world.

I leave these observations to your candid perusal; with an earnest request, that you would carefully and impartially consider the contents of 1 Cor. i.

Many great characters have repented, upon a dying bed, the principles they had disseminated through life.

I take my leave of you for the present; expecting you will answer these Remarks: for I ought not—I will not entertain a single moment the injurious thought, that you
would

would ever look upon any one of the community too contemptible for your notice, whose aim is benevolent—whose cause is truth.

That you may be perfectly qualified, by anticipation, to look forward to that august æra with superior delight, when the disciples of Jesus shall join in the harmonious chorus — “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing”—is the sincere prayer of,

REVEREND SIR,

(With all due respect)

Your obedient and humble Servant,

JOHN HOLLOWAY.

No. 8, WITTAM'S BUILDINGS,
OLD-STREET-ROAD, Hoxton.

